



# *News Release*

**For Immediate Release**

**Tuesday, June 28, 2004**

## **O'Rorke Bridge Public Dedication Date Set *Construction on Schedule as Bridge Opening Looms***

With construction of the new O'Rorke Bridge fast coming to completion, motorists and pedestrians will soon be crossing the Genesee River over the new four lane 918 foot span that is named after the Irish American Civil War hero, Colonel Patrick O'Rorke.

"The O'Rorke Bridge will be publicly dedicated at ceremonies scheduled for **October 2, 2004** and will include broad community involvement," said County Executive Maggie Brooks. With the help of such groups as the Col. Patrick O'Rorke Memorial Society, the Charlotte Neighborhood Association and many others, the historic event has already sparked great interest."

Exact details of the ribbon cutting celebration have not been finalized but are certain to include civil war re-enactor's, bagpipes, Irish dignitaries, and a few limited speeches from local dignitaries.

"One of the greatest challenges to setting the dedication date has been coordinating with contractors to ensure the bridge will be operationally open for traffic prior to the dedication date," said Terry Rice, Director of Monroe County's Department of Transportation. "While no firm date has been set, it is assured the bridge will be operating and functional well before the scheduled dedication ceremony."

### **COLONEL PATRICK O'RORKE**

Patrick O'Rorke was one of Rochester's greatest local heroes. His heroism and valor at Gettysburg during the Civil War ultimately cost him his life, but the battle at Little Round Top is often credited as a key engagement in winning Gettysburg and ultimately the war. The bridge will create a fitting memorial to one of this area's greatest heroes.

O'Rorke immigrated with his parents from County Cavan, Ireland to Canada in 1837. The O'Rorke family eventually settled in Rochester sometime between 1840 and 1842 and lived at 19 Emmett Street in what was then called Little Dublin.

O'Rorke was educated at School Number 9 on Parker Street and distinguished himself as an excellent student. After leaving school and turning down a scholarship to the University of Rochester, O'Rorke worked as an apprentice marble cutter at the old Hebard Marble Works on South Saint Paul Street.

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In 1857, Congressman John Williams world change O'Rorke's life forever. Congressman Williams nominated Patrick for appointment to the United States Military Academy. Later that year, he received and accepted his conditional appointment to West Point. He was the only member of his class born outside of the United States.

O'Rorke graduated first in his class from West Point in June 1861 and immediately saw action as a staff officer at the Battle of Bull Run in July 1861.

O'Rorke went from Bull Run to assist in the defense of Fort Monroe in August and eventually joined General Sherman that fall in South Carolina. During the spring of 1862, he was sent to assist in the capture of Fort Pulaski, S.C. and in July returned to Rochester on a brief furlough to marry his childhood sweetheart, Clara Wadsworth Bishop.

Shortly after his wedding, O'Rorke was promoted to Colonel and named to command the newly formed 140<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Regiment.

### **JULY 2<sup>ND</sup> DATE OF COLONEL PATRICK O'RORKE'S DEATH IN BATTLE**

It was as Colonel of the 140<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry that O'Rorke is most remembered. On July 2, 1863, during the Battle of Gettysburg, Colonel O'Rorke led a courageous charge over Little Round Top. O'Rorke charged ahead of his men to save the Army's cannons on the crest of the hill from being turned against the Union line. While the charge was successful in saving the cannons, it cost Colonel O'Rorke his life.

O'Rorke's heroic charge and tragic death are commemorated at the crest of Little Round Top by a monument with a bronze likeness of his face.

When the new bridge is dedicated in his name on Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, a commemorative plaque will be mounted on the control tower to honor his service and memory.

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